



DEPARTMENT OF CITY PLANNING RECOMMENDATION REPORT



City Planning Commission

Date: August 8, 2013
Time: After 8:30 am
Place: Los Angeles City Hall
Public Works Board Room 350
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Public Hearing: Required

Case No.: CPC-2012-3308-CDO-ZC
CEQA No.: ENV-2012-3362-ND
Council No.: 14 - Huizar
Plan Area: Central City Community Plan
Certified NC: Historic Cultural NC
GPLU: Regional Center Commercial,
Light Manufacturing, Open
Space, Public Facilities,
Community Commercial
Zone: Various
Applicant: City of Los Angeles

PROJECT LOCATION: The area of Downtown Los Angeles generally bound by Temple Street to the north, Alameda Street to the east, 3rd Street to the south, and Los Angeles Street to the west.

PROPOSED PROJECT: The establishment of the Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay (CDO) that applies design guidelines and development standards for site planning; building design and massing; architectural features; landscaping; vehicular access and parking; and signage to improve the visual and aesthetic quality of the District; encourage pedestrian-oriented development; and preserve and enhance the unique cultural and historic character of the neighborhood.

REQUESTED ACTION:

1. Pursuant to Section 12.32(S) of the Municipal Code, the adoption of the **Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay (CDO) District** with corresponding design guidelines and development standards.
2. Pursuant to Section 12.32(C) of the Los Angeles Municipal Code, a **Zone Change** to those parcels lying within the Little Tokyo CDO area from [Q]C2-3D to [Q]C2-3D-CDO, [Q]C2-3D-O to [Q]C2-3D-O-CDO, [Q]C2-4D to [Q]C2-4D-CDO, [Q]C2-4D-O to [Q]C2-4D-O-CDO, [Q]C4-2D to [Q]C4-2D-CDO, [Q]C4-4D to [Q]C4-4D-CDO, C2-2D-O to C2-2D-O-CDO, C2-4D to C2-4D-CDO, M2-2D-O to M2-2D-O-CDO, PF-2D to PF-2D-CDO, and R5-RD-O to R5-RD-O-CDO.
3. Pursuant to Section 21082.1(c)(3) of the California Resources Code, the adoption of the Negative Declaration No. ENV-2012-3362-ND.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

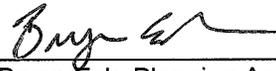
1. **Approve** the proposed Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay boundary.
2. **Approve and Recommend** that the City Council **Adopt** the **CDO boundaries** and **Zone Change Ordinance** establishing the CDO from those parcels within the proposed district from [Q]C2-3D to [Q]C2-3D-CDO, [Q]C2-3D-O to [Q]C2-3D-O-CDO, [Q]C2-4D to [Q]C2-4D-CDO, [Q]C2-4D-O to [Q]C2-4D-O-CDO, [Q]C4-2D to [Q]C4-2D-CDO, [Q]C4-4D to [Q]C4-4D-CDO, C2-2D-O to C2-2D-O-CDO, C2-4D to C2-4D-CDO, M2-2D-O to M2-2D-O-CDO, PF-2D to PF-2D-CDO, and R5-RD-O to R5-RD-O-CDO (Exhibit A).

3. **Approve** the proposed Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay (Exhibit B).
4. **Adopt** the attached Findings.
5. **Approve** and **Recommend** that the City Council **Adopt** Negative Declaration No. ENV-2012-3362-ND (Exhibit C).

MICHAEL J. LOGRANDE
Director of Planning



Ken Bernstein, AICP, Principal City Planner



Bryan Eck, Planning Assistant
Telephone: (213) 978.1304



Kevin J. Keller, AICP, City Planner



Conni Pallini-Tipton, AICP, City Planner



Nicholas Maricich, City Planner

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Project Analysis	A-1
Project Summary	
Background	
Issues	
Conclusion	
Findings	F-1
General Plan/Charter Findings	
Environmental Findings	
Public Hearing and Communications	P-1
Exhibits:	
A – Proposed CDO Boundary and Zone Change Ordinance	
B – Proposed Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay	
C – Environmental Clearance: ENV-2012-3362-ND	
D – Council Motion, CF No. 06-1086	
E – Historic & Cultural Little Tokyo Community Map	

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Project Summary

The Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay (CDO) is a Supplemental Use District per Section 13.08 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code. It is comprised of two components that are before the commission for consideration:

1. Approving and recommending that the City Council adopt the Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay Zone Change (established by ordinance);
2. Adoption of the Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay Design Guidelines and Standards;

A CDO is a planning tool intended to implement the objectives of the Community Plan; it can enhance the visual and aesthetic quality of an area by imposing design guidelines and standards, applicable to new developments and to alterations of existing buildings. The proposed Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay provides guidelines and standards for development projects on properties generally located within the Little Tokyo neighborhood between Temple Street on the north, Alameda Street on the east, 3rd Street to the south, and Los Angeles Street on the west, in the Central City Community Plan Area. The intent of the CDO is to provide design guidance and direction to enhance the visual identity, to improve the appearance, and reinforce the walkability of Little Tokyo.

Background

In 2006, a motion (CF 06-1086) was approved by the City Council which directed the Planning Department to initiate a Community Design Overlay (CDO) in Little Tokyo to formally incorporate the Little Tokyo Design Guidelines developed by the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). On January 29, 2008, the PLUM Committee approved another motion (CF 08-0224) instructing the Department of City Planning to report with recommendations and options for preserving the separate and distinct identity of Little Tokyo. The Planning Department recommended the establishment of a Community Design Overlay for Little Tokyo to promote the distinctive character of the area. The report also identified concerns within the community that the Little Tokyo CRA area and accompanying Design Guidelines were set to expire and the community would have no oversight of by-right development in the neighborhood. As a response to these motions and the imminent expiration of the CRA guidelines, the Planning Department initiated the Little Tokyo CDO study.

The project area is comprised of an approximately 18 block area of Downtown Los Angeles (see Exhibit A) located within the Central City Community Plan area. The area has developed in a varied pattern that ranges from predominantly small-scale historic buildings on the north side of East First Street, to larger scale development, such as the 13-story Little Tokyo Towers residential project on Third Street, and low-to mid-rise industrial and warehouse buildings along the south side of Third Street. Little Tokyo also contains a range of significant Japanese religious and cultural institutions and consists of a mix of residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional uses. The neighborhood is flanked by the Arts District to the east, Civic Center to the west, and the Historic Core, Toy District, and Skid Row areas to the south.

The streets of Little Tokyo are pedestrian-oriented and lined with active neighborhood serving uses, such as neighborhood-serving retail shops, restaurants, and cafes. A centerpoint of the neighborhood are several prominent pedestrian paseos: Astronaut Ellison S Onizuka Street, Azusa Street, and the Japanese Village Plaza. The pedestrian friendly neighborhood is served by a light rail Gold Line Station along the eastern edge of the CDO area, and will become home to a future Regional Connector light rail station, forecast to open in 2020.

The land use designations of properties within the proposed Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay area include Regional Center Commercial, Public Facilities, Open Space, Community Commercial, & Light Manufacturing. The CDO area is a fully urbanized area within the City's Downtown Center.

History of the Subject Area

The Little Tokyo Community is one of California's three remaining Japantowns (Los Angeles, San Jose, and San Francisco) with a diverse history that extends over 120 years to the past and has experienced tremendous change during these years. In the 1930s, Little Tokyo grew into America's largest Japanese settlement and generally extended from Main Street to the Los Angeles River between 1st Street and 5th Street. The community was disrupted with the internment of persons of Japanese descent during World War II. Following the war many Japanese Americans did not re-settle in Little Tokyo which, along with the loss of housing and commercial areas as a result of the expansion of the Civic Center, resulted in a decline of the area.

In the mid-1950s, community leaders began discussing plans to revitalize Little Tokyo. By 1962, the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Association was formed as a non-profit organization by the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California with membership made up of both Issei (Japanese-born) and Nisei (American-born second generation). Los Angeles city officials met with members of the community, as well as with businesses, property owners and non-profit organizations, in order to support the vision toward revitalization. These discussions led to the identification of a nine-block area designated for redevelopment. A plan was presented to the City, and in 1970, the City Council approved the proposal and created the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Area as a distinct district for a term of 30 years. Several subsequent extensions were added to the plan, extending its life to February 2014.

Additionally, in 1984 the commercial lots on the north side of 1st Street from Judge Aiso to Central Avenue were designated a National Register Historic District which requires compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards of Rehabilitation. Guidelines were developed for signage, windows, and awnings as part of the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Plan for the rehabilitation of the Historic District, which were not adopted by the City Council.

The proposed Little Tokyo CDO has been developed to replace selected components of the planning and design oversight that has been in place with the Redevelopment Plan since 1970. The CDO guidelines were adapted from the 2005 Little Tokyo Planning & Design Guidelines developed as part of the Redevelopment Plan. Also incorporated are the guidelines for the National Historic District along the north side of 1st Street.

Little Tokyo Today

Currently, Little Tokyo remains an active commercial, residential, religious, cultural, and historical community center in Downtown Los Angeles. In recent years, Little Tokyo has seen the construction of new mixed use residential-commercial development on infill sites, further contributing to the vitality of the area. In addition to being the center for Japanese-American culture and community, Little Tokyo offers a unique intersection of art and history on pedestrian-oriented streets that contribute to Little Tokyo's distinctive identity and sense of place.

Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay Goals and Objectives

The goal of the Little Tokyo CDO is to implement a vision of a cohesive, pedestrian-friendly, and vibrant mixed-use district. Additionally, by encouraging a mix of retail, services, office uses, entertainment uses and housing, the CDO can help generate concentrations of pedestrian activity to support both transit and an active street environment. The CDO guidelines can ensure that new developments and storefronts invite the pedestrian, promote safe and active streets, and contribute attractive public open spaces.

The design guidelines and standards are intended to ensure that storefronts and building facades are inviting, pedestrian-oriented, and maintain visual continuity. This can be reinforced through a consistent streetwall built to the property line, adequate ground-level transparency, pedestrian-scaled signage, and entrances oriented towards the street. Further, the provisions found in the Community Design Overlay emphasize respect for area's rich historic and cultural characteristics. The design guidelines are intended to be flexible in application, providing direction for design treatment without mandating architectural style or form. The implementation of these guidelines ensures that each project contributes to a more

functional, walkable, and appealing neighborhood. In this way, improvements to individual properties can, over time, enhance the function of Little Tokyo as regional destination, cultural and social center.

The Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay's stated goals are:

- Respect for the unique cultural and historic heritage of the Little Tokyo neighborhood;
- A vibrant community that meets the needs of all;
- A thriving and sustainable local economy that balances residents and visitors;
- A walkable and connected neighborhood.

These goals are achieved by the stated objectives in the document:

- Preserving and promoting Little Tokyo's history and cultural identity and character;
- Encouraging appropriate rehabilitation of structures within the National Register Historic District, in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, while retaining and promoting the cultural history of Little Tokyo;
- Preserving religious institutions by better connecting them to the community through compatible development and improved pedestrian linkages.
- Promoting and sustaining a thriving and active community;
- Encouraging amenities and promoting publicly accessible spaces in new development that caters to a range of age groups including youth, families, and seniors;
- Attracting people of various cultures and generations;
- Promoting land uses in Little Tokyo that will address the needs of visitors and local residents;
- Creating an urban form that fosters social relationships and a sense of community;
- Creating places for people to socialize and recreate;
- Encouraging development that contributes to the safety and comfort of Little Tokyo residents and visitors.
- Encouraging mixed-income and mixed-use developments;
- Balancing regional attractions with neighborhood-serving uses and amenities;
- Fostering a 24-hour Little Tokyo, allowing for nighttime activities and safe and active public streets;
- Allowing for a variety of land uses, including residential, retail, commercial, religious, cultural, recreational, and entertainment uses;
- Encouraging the addition of more local businesses, especially those that promote community culture, history, and a sustainable community economy;
- Encouraging business activity by promoting accessibility and improving circulation within the district.
- Providing a pedestrian-friendly environment with amenities that foster active streets and encourage social interaction;
- Preserving and enhancing the pedestrian "spine" of Little Tokyo;
- Fostering better connections with the Arts District, Historic Core, Civic Center, El Pueblo, and other neighboring communities;
- Ensuring that any potential infill projects contribute to the urban form of Little Tokyo, in particular, by reinforcing the pedestrian realm.

Issues

Pedestrian-Oriented Development

The Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay is intended to help promote and reinforce the neighborhood's pedestrian orientation. The objective is to encourage new development that creates a pleasant experience and supports pedestrian activity by guiding thoughtful site planning and building articulation and details. The CDO will ensure that new development is oriented towards the street and minimizes conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles by locating vehicle access and loading areas where there will be minimal physical or visual impacts. The design guidelines will also encourage street level development that contributes to the pedestrian-friendly environment by reinforcing a consistent streetwall

of transparent storefronts, discouraging blank walls, and encouraging well-designed signage and wayfinding to facilitate pedestrian movement.

Cultural Character Preservation

A key objective of the plan is to preserve the unique cultural and historic character of Little Tokyo. The design guidelines encourage projects that are designed to seek compatibility by creating continuity between the historic and cultural context of buildings in relationship to the existing pattern and scale of streets, sidewalks, public spaces, and parking. An objective of the guidelines is to achieve a harmonious balance between new and existing buildings that are sensitive to the scale, form, height, proportion, and detailing of surrounding development.

Community Design Overlay Boundary

Since the onset of meetings with Planning Staff and stakeholders from the Little Tokyo Community, the precise extent of the area proposed to be regulated by the CDO has been a subject of discussion. While there is general consensus in regards to the proposed CDO guidelines, the cultural and historic significance of Little Tokyo as a larger district and the proximity of adjacent districts with distinct identities have illustrated differing opinions on the proper boundary of the CDO district. Through the community input process a diversity of viewpoints were expressed concerning the delineation of the CDO boundary.

Alternative boundaries have been suggested by stakeholders representing various communities in and around Little Tokyo. At the public hearing, diverse testimony concerning the proposed boundary was submitted from community members representing Little Tokyo, the Arts District, the Central Industrial District, and Skid Row. It was noted that because of the historic extent of Little Tokyo, several important cultural sites and institutions are located east of Alameda Street and fall outside of the CDO boundary as proposed. Representatives from the Arts District expressed concern regarding a potential boundary expansion east of Alameda, citing concerns over the application of guidelines to preserve cultural characteristics of an adjacent district for commercial and mixed use land uses in the Arts District which contains industrial uses. Stakeholders from the Central Industrial community suggested that the CDO would be ill-suited for the blocks along the south side of 3rd Street between Omar Ave and Central Ave, specifically citing concerns over the CDO guidelines which limit the use of security grills. Also in regards to that portion of the CDO on the south side of 3rd Street, a representative from the Skid Row community submitted testimony that Skid Row extends north to 3rd Street and took exception with inclusion of this southerly portion of 3rd Street into the proposed CDO.

Planning staff does not recommend modified boundaries to the proposed Community Design Overlay. The boundary as proposed builds on the Little Tokyo Redevelopment Plan Area, which includes the historic and cultural heart of Little Tokyo and the majority of the important cultural and historic sites. This preexisting boundary did not extend east of Alameda and extended south to 3rd Street. The importance of cultural institutions within the greater Little Tokyo vicinity has been highlighted in the CDO with a new map identifying those sites. These diagrams recognize important key cultural and religious institutions that were not included with the CDO boundaries. Future planning and design efforts, with careful regard to identified cultural institutions, will be better suited to address the area east of Alameda, a transitioning area with a different land use pattern from the core area of Little Tokyo.

Conclusion

The Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay was developed to guide new development in Little Tokyo that respects the unique cultural and historic character of the neighborhood. The standards and guidelines of the CDO regulate building details, site planning, signage, landscaping, and lighting with the objective of reinforcing the pedestrian-oriented scale of the neighborhood and supporting the existing character of the neighborhood, while allowing for the continued growth and development of Little Tokyo. The proposed CDO will cover the main blocks of Little Tokyo, including the commercial core of the neighborhood, the entire CRA project area, and the historic heart of the community. The establishment of the CDO will ensure that new development continues to receive review that is consistent with the vision of the community as articulated in the expiring CRA guidelines. Lastly, the CDO can help ensure that future

projects promote pedestrian activity and contribute to the visual and aesthetic quality of Downtown Los Angeles, while emphasizing the unique character and design components of Little Tokyo.

FINDINGS

General Plan/Charter Findings

In accordance with **Charter Sections 556 and 558**, the proposed Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay and accompanying zone change are in substantial conformance with the purposes, intent and provisions of the City's General Plan, and all applicable provisions of the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC).

General Plan Framework/Central City Community Plan Consistency

The establishment of the Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay and accompanying zone change is consistent with, and helps to further accomplish the following goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan Framework, in addition to several similar provisions stated in the Central City Community Plan, a component of the Land Use Element of the General Plan:

General Plan Framework

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| <i>Objective 3.17</i> | Maintain significant historic and architectural districts while allowing for the development of economically viable uses. |
| <i>Objective 5.1</i> | Translate the Framework Element's intent with respect to citywide urban form and neighborhood design to the community and neighborhood levels through locally prepared plans that build on each neighborhood's attributes, emphasize quality of development, and provide or advocate "proactive" implementation programs. |
| <i>Policy 5.1.1</i> | Use the Community Plan Update process and related efforts to define the character of communities and neighborhoods at a finer grain than the Framework Element permits. |

The Little Tokyo CDO creates design guidelines and standards for the neighborhood to maintain the area as an important historic and cultural district. Further, the guidelines and standards of the CDO are congruent with the area's General Plan Framework designation, "Downtown Center," which is considered an international center for finance and trade that serves the population of the five-county metropolitan region. It is also the primary economic, governmental, and social center of Los Angeles. It contains the largest governmental center in the region, the location of the region's major cultural and entertainment facilities, and its principal transportation hub. The CDO helps to support its role as the primary center of urban activity for the Los Angeles region by guiding development that reflects a high design standard and hosts a variety of uses. In addition, it will guide new development that activates streets and enhances public safety to meet the needs of Downtown visitors and a growing residential population.

Central City Community Plan – Urban Design Chapter

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| <i>Policy</i> | Maintain the integrity of Little Tokyo as a Japanese-American cultural and residential-commercial community. |
| <i>Policy</i> | Maintain existing and improve overall pedestrian linkage, including Azusa Street as a Pedestrian Walk, within Little Tokyo, as well as with neighboring districts (e.g., Arts District, industrial areas, Civic Center). |
| <i>Policy</i> | Increase pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, using Japanese-themed plant materials, street furniture and other streetscape elements, wherever practicable. |
| <i>Policy</i> | Complete the Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay Zone and integrate the Planning and Design Guidelines. |

The proposed Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay implements the objectives and policies of the Central City Community Plan. It has been identified as a key implementation program of the community plan to craft a CDO for Little Tokyo to maintain the unique identity of the neighborhood. The pedestrian-oriented design features of the CDO encourage better pedestrian linkages between Little Tokyo and

adjoining districts, while cultural preservation guidelines support improved streetscapes through the use of subtle Japanese design aesthetic.

A goal of the Central City Community Plan is to maintain the integrity of Little Tokyo as a Japanese-American cultural and residential-commercial community and to improve pedestrian linkages within the neighborhood and with adjoining districts. Preservation of the unique cultural and historic character of Little Tokyo, and careful consideration for the pedestrian scale of the neighborhood are some of the fundamental goals of the CDO. These are consistent with the goals of the General Plan Framework and Central City Community Plan to expand and reinforce the distinct districts of Downtown and to link pockets of activity via vibrant, pedestrian-friendly streets. The Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay aims to foster a Little Tokyo that lives up to the vision as stated in the Community Plan and to be consistent with the previously stated goals and objectives.

These design guidelines and standards will ensure that future development occurs in conformance with the above stated goals and will regulate new construction, signage, landscaping, and the rehabilitation of historic buildings to assure a high-quality urban environment. The guidelines and standards will encourage that all development be built to the property line; parking be located to the rear of a lot or underground, as feasible; ground floors maintain transparency and contain active uses; and new construction complement the scale and massing of the existing fabric of the neighborhood. Specific site planning guidelines address setbacks, storefront orientation, vehicular access, publically accessible open space, and parking structures and generally aim to reinforce the existing streetwall. Building design guidelines regulate massing, facades, wall openings, and corporate identity architecture. Architectural detail guidelines include exterior surface materials and colors, storefront entrances and windows, awnings and canopies, rooflines, graffiti abatement, and lighting. Landscape guidelines include provisions for surface parking lots, publically accessible open spaces, and sustainable design. Sign guidelines are intended to limit clutter and encourage a subtle expression of Japanese design aesthetic. Lastly, guidelines related to appurtenances regulate security grills, utilities, mechanical equipment, trash containers, loading areas, and sidewalk dining enclosures, all with the intent of improving the visual quality and pedestrian-friendly nature of Little Tokyo.

Public Necessity, Convenience, General Welfare, & Good Zoning

Los Angeles **City Charter Section 558** and **LAMC Section 12.32(C)(7)** require that prior to adopting a land use ordinance, the City Council make findings that the ordinance conforms with public necessity, convenience, general welfare, and good zoning practice. The proposed Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay and Zone Change conform to public necessity, convenience, general welfare, and good zoning practice in the following respects: The Little Tokyo CDO creates guidelines and standards for new development to help protect the unique cultural and historic character of Little Tokyo and reinforce the neighborhood's pedestrian-orientation. The neighborhood is an important regional resource for the Japanese-American community that also draws visitors, serves the needs of its residents, and supports a vibrant environment for local business. The CDO guidelines will ensure that the existing historic structures are rehabilitated appropriately; new construction is compatible with the existing context; new projects will enhance and reinforce the existing pedestrian environment; and that the aesthetic and visual quality of the area will be improved and complement the unique cultural character of Little Tokyo. By encouraging a mix of uses, the CDO can help increase pedestrian activity and neighborhood vibrancy to support transit, foster an active and safe street environment, and continue to link the various Downtown neighborhoods.

Community Design Overlay (CDO) District

LAMC Section 12.32(S) requires initiation of a Supplemental Use District on the part of the City Council, City Planning Commission, or the Director of Planning. The establishment of the Little Tokyo CDO is an identified program found in the Urban Design chapter of the Central City Community Plan. The proposed CDO is undertaken as a follow-up implementation program of the community plan, which was adopted by City Council on January 8, 2003 and last amended on April 24, 2009.

The proposed Community Design Overlay is in conformance with the provisions of **LAMC Section 13.08**, in that it promotes the distinctive character, stability, and visual quality of Little Tokyo by ensuring that

new development provides a sense of place by careful consideration of the unique architectural character and setting of the neighborhood. The CDO also will ensure that development in the area takes place in accordance with community design policies of the adopted Central City Community Plan, including the Downtown Design Guide, which aims to ensure a quality of design and a mix of uses appropriate for and benefitting Downtown Los Angeles.

The proposed Community Design Overlay (CDO) and accompanying Zone Change boundaries are established in accordance with the provisions of Section 12.32(S) of the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC), and are consistent with the purpose of a CDO as set forth in Section 13.08(a) of the Municipal Code. The establishment of the Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay will enhance the physical and aesthetic environment and help implement the goals of the General Plan.

Based on the above findings, the proposed Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay is deemed in substantial conformance with the purposes, intent and provisions of the City's General Plan, and all applicable provisions of the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC); consistent with public necessity, convenience, general welfare, and good zoning practice; and in is accordance with the establishment of a Supplemental Use District and satisfies the purposes of a Community Design Overlay District.

Environmental Findings

A Negative Declaration (ND) (ENV-2012-3362-ND) was prepared for the proposed project per the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). On the basis of the whole of the record before the lead agency including any comments received, the lead agency finds that there is no substantial evidence that the proposed project will have a significant effect on the environment. The attached Negative Declaration reflects the lead agency's independent judgment and analysis. The records upon which this decision is based are with the Policy Planning Section of the Planning Department in Room 667, 200 North Spring Street.

PUBLIC HEARING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Stakeholder Meetings

The CDO has been developed in close collaboration between the Los Angeles Department of City Planning and a working group of Little Tokyo stakeholders. Between 2009 and 2012, the working group helped develop the Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay goals, policies, and design guidelines to ensure the continued pedestrian-friendly nature of the neighborhood and to help reinforce its unique cultural and historic character. The 2005 Little Tokyo Planning & Design Guidelines, developed by the former CRA/LA, served as the basis for the proposed Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay. Subsequent workshops and open houses have broadened community involvement, including Little Tokyo residents, business owners, and representatives of adjacent districts in the development of these guidelines. The Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay ultimately reflects community goals for a vibrant, attractive, pedestrian-friendly neighborhood that responds to the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors and preserves the unique cultural and historic character of the neighborhood.

Public Workshop

The City Planning Department hosted a large Public Workshop on Tuesday, January 29, 2013 at the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center at 244 South San Pedro Street. The intent of the workshop was to introduce the community to the Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay and ask community members to evaluate the draft guidelines. A notice was mailed to each household within 500 feet of the proposed CDO area and email was sent to stakeholders, the Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council, Council District 14, and other interested parties.

A total of 74 participants attended the workshop and commented on the various aspects of the draft Little Tokyo CDO:

- Many participants were concerned that the boundary of the CDO did not include several important Japanese cultural institutions including: Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, Zenshuji Soto Mission, and Maryknoll/Saint Francis Xavier Catholic Church.
- Attendees appreciated the careful consideration for the pedestrian-orientated design features found throughout the CDO.
- There was an expressed need for better pedestrian connections between Little Tokyo and the surrounding neighborhoods, especially the neighboring Arts District.
- Safety and security in the neighborhood were important concerns, particularly along the pedestrian spine, alleys, and walkways of the neighborhood, which were believed to need better lighting and other security measures.
- Participants noted that special attention needs to be paid to massing and detailing to ensure that new buildings are built with respect to the scale and character of the neighborhood.
- Concerns were raised about the importance of transitions between historic and new buildings.
- Several attendees expressed that landscaping and signage are two important areas to enhance and reinforce the character of the neighborhood.
- A few participants believed signage should be thoughtful and uncluttered.
- Finally, several commented that the function and sustainability of landscaping is important, as is its cultural significance to the identity of the neighborhood.

Open House/Public Hearing

A noticed Public Hearing was held for the proposed Little Tokyo Community Design Overlay and accompanying Zone Change on February 20, 2013 at the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center. The meeting was preceded by an Open House to impart the changes made in response to comments received at the Public Workshop and a presentation by staff. Invitations to the meeting were mailed as an official hearing notice to all households within 500 feet of the proposed overlay. The notice was also sent to interested parties. Approximately 45 participants attended the meeting and 22 attendees provided public testimony.

Summary of Public Hearing and Communications Received

In addition to written and verbal testimony submitted at the hearing, the Hearing Officer left the public comment period open through March 25, 2013 for additional written communication. Many of the comments received echoed those received at the public workshop. The following is a summary of comments received at the February 20, 2013 Public Hearing:

- Comments received on the Little Tokyo CDO guidelines were almost exclusively in support. Many praised the pedestrian-oriented design components, attention to scale, character, and massing, and the inclusion of subtle Japanese aesthetic that is not overly prescriptive.
- A large amount of the comments received were in regards to the proposed Zone Change boundary. The following concerns related to the boundary were:
 - Many pointed out that the historical extent of Little Tokyo covers a larger area than what is proposed for inclusion in the CDO.
 - There is a collection of important Japanese historic and cultural institutions that fall outside of the proposed boundary, including Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, Zenshuji Soto Mission, and Maryknoll/Saint Francis Xavier Catholic Church.
 - The Mangrove Site (the City-owned property at the northeast corner of 1st and Alameda) should be included as part of the CDO.
 - Several stakeholders in the Arts District were opposed to the inclusion of areas east of Alameda in the CDO.
 - Stakeholders from Central Industrial Area were opposed to the inclusion of the areas on the south side of 3rd Street between Omar Avenue and Central Avenue.
 - Stakeholders from the Skid Row community were opposed to the inclusion of the areas on the south side of 3rd Street.
 - Several commenters suggested that the guidelines, as presented, were unsuitable for application beyond the original study area, especially in regards to any potential use in the industrial areas east of Alameda Street and would require additional study and outreach if the CDO Zone Change boundary were to be expanded into the Arts District.